



# **ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

## **Information Management Strategy 2026 - 2029**





## Introduction

*Information Management describes the means by which an organisation “efficiently governs, plans, controls, collects, creates, evaluates, organises, stores, analyses, disseminates, maintains, and disposes of its information, and through which it ensures that the value of that information is identified and exploited to the fullest extent.*

As a Council we face a changing landscape in terms of how we manage and process information. The introduction of M365 opens opportunities for collaboration both within and out with our organisation. It defines our vision, strategic objectives and overall direction of travel for Information Management across the Council. This document outlines the approach that the Council will take to the deployment and development of improved processes, procedures and technologies for better management of our information.

The strategy has been developed on the basis that information is:

- Critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council;
- Recognised and valued as an asset, which is demonstrated through delivery of this strategy;
- Managed efficiently and consistently, and in a way that enables delivery of our core organisational objectives;
- Appropriately secured while remaining readily accessible to everyone who needs it at the right time and place and in the right format to facilitate delivery of services; and
- Reliable, accurate, and proactively managed throughout all stages of the life cycle.

## Our Vision

Our overarching and long-term vision is to seamlessly integrate information and records management requirements into the digital environment for Council staff and those working with the organisation. This will play an important role in enabling the Council to deliver our priorities as well as maximising the potential of information to facilitate continuous improvement.

We will create a better information ecosystem that realises the full potential of information; manages, shares, and uses information responsibly and supports Argyll and Bute Council’s wider ambitions.

## Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives to achieve our vision are to:

- Improve business processes by moving towards the digitisation of information, focussing on contributing to the delivery of business objectives.

- Implement an information governance framework across the organisation, which will enable the consistent application of standards and the maximisation of system functionality to automate tasks wherever possible.
- Deliver cost effective solutions to managing information and records which seamlessly integrate with business processes across the organisation.

### Principles

The principles that will underpin delivery of the strategy are:

1. Information is an essential asset that requires effective management to fully maximise its potential for supporting the business and enable information-led, fully informed decision making.
2. Information that can be publicly shared will be shared through the Council's website, ensuring we meet our commitment to operate according to the key principles of transparency, openness, fairness and accessibility.
3. Everyone within the organisation has a role in delivering information management.
4. Our workforce will be supported to maintain and develop their skills to understand the value of our information, manage and respect it accordingly.
5. Information is managed throughout its lifecycle to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Wherever possible, best practice is used to further support business processes and make efficiency savings.
6. The right information is made internally available in the right place at the right time and shared with appropriate security controls.
7. Information is accurate, reliable, fit for purpose and readily available to service users.
8. Our approach to information governance recognises the contributions of all the key teams, who will support delivery of the strategy.

### Governance

The Council's relevant policies, procedures and guidance are regularly reviewed and will need to be aligned to the strategy at the time of review.

Roles and responsibilities for delivering the strategy, groups, and individuals:

- Policy and Resources Committee - responsible for the consideration and approval of the Records Management Plan and associated strategies and policies, which will be implemented through the work of the Information Management project board and the Information Management project team.
- Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) – Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support, has senior management responsibility for information management in their role as Senior Information Risk Officer. This includes supporting application of this strategy throughout the organisation.
- Information Management project board - owners of this strategy and responsible for strategy implementation. The project board will provide updates and comments to the Executive Leadership Team and the Policy and Resources

Committee to help inform decision making relating to information governance related policies.

- Information Management Project Team - responsible for operational implementation of the Information Management project within each department/service along with appropriate resource from the department/service.
- Heads of Service – Responsible as Information Asset Owners for their service for ensuring their staff support the implementation of this strategy.
- All Staff and Elected Members – Everyone within the organisation has a role in delivering information and data management in line with this strategy.

### *Delivering the Strategy*

The implementation of the strategy is ambitious and to be successful, needs to be delivered on the basis of continuous improvement.

Delivery of the strategy will be multifaceted, although the following themes are integrated into each workstream:

- Services will be confident that the project team have recognised any complexity that may exist in their processes and that it will be effectively managed during any change process
- There will be a focus on employees being able to adopt different working practices where required, ensuring that tangible and visible benefits are articulated as a rationale for change
- Risk will be proactively managed from the outset with project activities prioritised based on risk and how the change will support delivery of other organisational strategic objectives
- There will be early recognition of the resources and input required from services and steps will be taken to mitigate the impact while clearly and concisely communicating the implications of significant change projects
- This will include appropriate training for every employee, which will be appropriate to the role they have in managing organisational records
- Each workstream will have robust governance procedures that will provide a framework for delivery as well as quality assurance for change
- As stated in the vision, the ultimate deliverable will always be to seamlessly integrate information and records management requirements into the digital environment for employees and those working with the organisation.

### *Measuring Success*

Strategy implementation will cover the four key elements of the Information Management Framework with a number of projects required to successfully deliver the strategy's vision across the Council. These elements are represented on figure 1. It should be noted that some projects will be designed to address multiple elements.

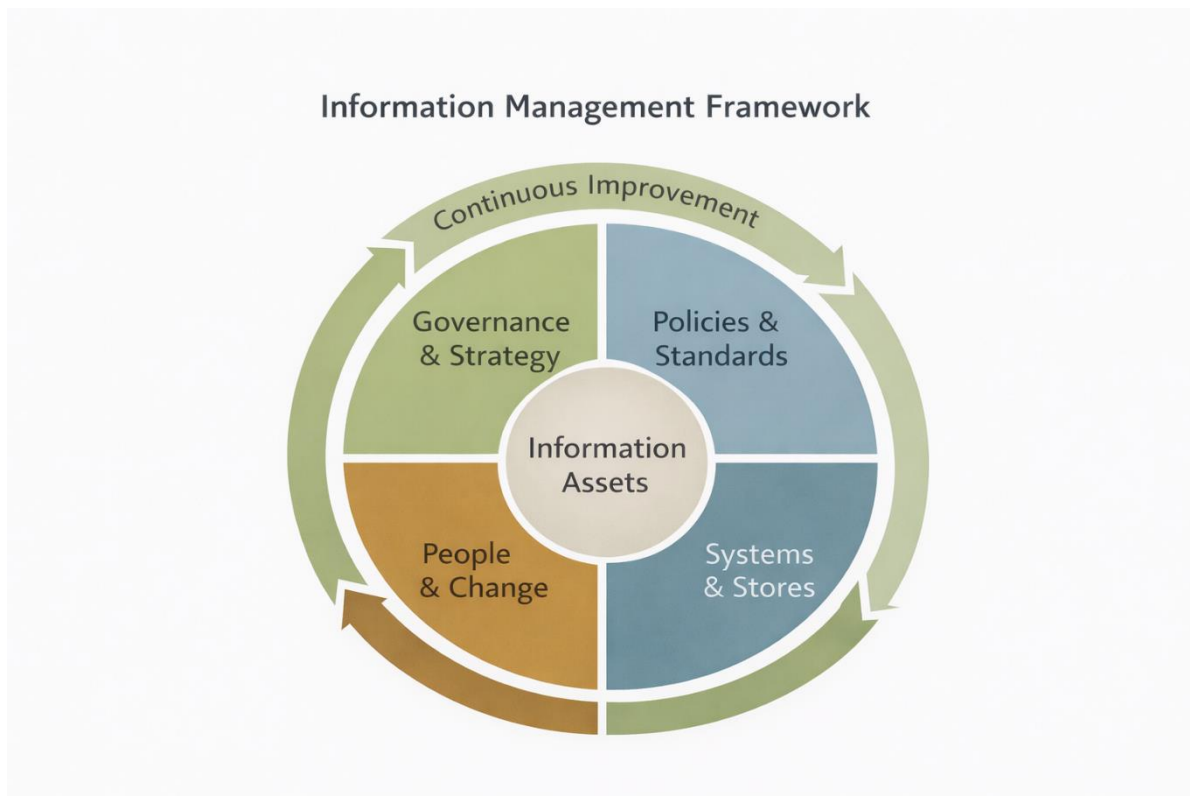
While there will be immediate benefits from addressing elements 1 and 2 in terms of creating an appropriate environment in which to deliver the strategy, elements 3 and 4 focus on achieving the long-term strategic objectives set out above.

Element 3 focusses on the practical implementation of good information governance across the Council, requiring the information governance framework to be applied across all Council systems and functions, while element 4 addresses the need to fully embed the necessary cultural change and ensure new working practices become the accepted way of working.

Achieving the strategic objectives represents a major change project for the Council and, at an organisational level, requires significant commitment as well as varying levels of input from staff across the Council.

The strategy will be reviewed annually (or on a regular basis) to ensure it remains fit for purpose and at that time, this section will be updated to reflect progress as well as highlight the key tasks that require delivery to achieve the objectives.

### Figure 1 – Key Elements of the Information Management Framework



Each element of the strategy implementation is heavily entwined with phase 3 of the corporate M365 project focusing on Information Management and includes the implementation of information governance arrangements for M365.

### ***Element One: Governance and Strategy***

The vision of the first element of strategy implementation is to articulate an information governance framework that will:

- enable information held and processed by the Council to be effectively and consistently managed.
- allow information and records management tasks to be automated wherever possible.
- provide a robust and sustainable foundation for the delivery of subsequent elements, which will accommodate both anticipated and unforeseen change.

### ***Element Two: Policies and Standards***

Element two will deliver the required policies, procedures, and guidance to implement the information architecture. Completion of element 2 actions are likely to be required for much of the work required to support element 3 although it is possible that projects linked to element 3 will be progressed system by system and will therefore need different requirements of element 2 to be met.

### ***Element Three: Systems and Store***

Delivery of element three will require a review of information stores, datasets and systems currently used by the Councils services to ensure appropriate records

management is being applied where records lie out with the corporate Electronic Document Record Management Systems already in place, eg Civica, etc.

### ***Element Four: People and Change***

The goal of element four is to fully embed the change within the Council. The final shift to M365 which includes the move to SharePoint online for information currently held in on premise SharePoint and shared file servers will be a fundamental change to the culture of the organisation. Throughout delivery of all element requirements, opportunities to automate as many tasks as possible will be identified and implemented, with the final stage addressing any final actions required to fully implement the strategy.

A high-level list of activities that will be required to deliver the requirements of these elements is the action plan at Appendix 1.

This is a significant change project and therefore it is likely that different parts of the organisation will be moving through the elements at different times although all moving in the same direction of travel.

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan/Element Activities

### Element 1

The first element will focus on developing information governance frameworks that will facilitate delivery of the vision and the strategic objectives. The first phase of the work has begun in financial year 2025/2026.

Some of the key deliverables of phases 1 and 2 relate to fundamental requirements for information governance and will be delivered with external IM support as required.

The detailed plan for delivering the outputs is provided in the IM project documentation for this initial stage of the project and the deliverables are:

- A reviewed and updated information management strategy
- A proposed information architecture that is robust, sustainable and can be used across the Council's information assets to show where information should be stored and how it will be managed. This will be carried out through the introduction of the new Business Classification Scheme and Information Asset Registers.
- Gap analysis of M365 information governance and records management capabilities and identification of work required to deliver compliance requirements
- Plan for migrating information to M365, identifying what information will be transferred, which M365 tools to use. Development of use cases for the M365 tools as appropriate
- High level governance proposals on controls for managing information within M365. Roadmap for implementation of subsequent elements including proposals for managing retention and disposal, management of metadata standards, security and permissions, and file plan.

### Element 2

The key deliverables of element 2 are developing essential information governance policies for the organisation. These form a vital part of the information governance framework as they should be informing decisions about technical functionality.

At the time of writing, the Council is also working on a resubmission of its Records Management Plan RMP (a legally required document under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011) with many of the requirements of the RMP reflecting the deliverables of Element 2.

The deliverables will be:

- A gap analysis of existing policies and procedures to understand where additional policies need to be developed and approved. This will use the elements of the RMP as an initial framework or checklist.

- The development of any policies that are not currently in place at the Council. These will be developed by the M365 project board and approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.
- Where the Council does have an existing policy, the policy will be reviewed and updated as required.
- Each service area will have an up-to-date Information Asset Register which reflects the governance needs of the information assets that they work with.

### Element 3

The focus of element 3 is to use the organisational policies developed and approved (or reviewed) during element 2 to specify the required functionality within Council systems for managing records. Wherever possible, the policies will be integrated into system functionality in a way that automates records management tasks, reducing the resource implications for teams across the Council. Appropriate automation of these tasks will also considerably reduce a number of corporate risks as automation will ensure they are carried out, and that they are carried out consistently.

For the duration of this strategy, this work will be focussing upon SharePoint and the M365 environment. The main deliverables of this element will be:

- The integration of the work from elements 1 and 2 to produce a fully functional working environment for each service across the Council. This environment will maximise the potential of the system to support delivery of their work while significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of managing records and information.
- The managed migration of content from existing working environments to the SharePoint environment.
- The development and roll out of appropriate information and guidance of all those that will be working in the M365 environment.
- Appropriate information management controls will be considered for existing third-party line of business case management/record keeping systems at system upgrade or replacement.

### Element 4

The final element will be to fully embed new behaviours and cultural change into working practices across the Council to enable delivery of this strategy as well as demonstrate how it is facilitating and enabling delivery of the wider Council vision.

Preparation for this element will be started during the initial 3 elements, ensuring that staff have all the necessary foundational policies, guidance, resources, and tools to benefit from their new working environment. Fundamentally, the previous elements should enable staff to carry out information management tasks more effectively and with confidence, and this element will focus on ensuring every role within the organisation can realise the potential benefits.

The specific activities for this element will be developed as the Council progresses through the initial elements, and this strategy will be updated accordingly at each annual review.